

First Moon



Celebrating
the onset of
Menstruation

14.99

written by Anke Mai & Illustrated by Lorye Keats Hopper

FIRST MOON

Celebrating the onset of Menstruation

A book for mothers and daughters

Words by Anke Mai

Pictures by Lorye Keats Hopper

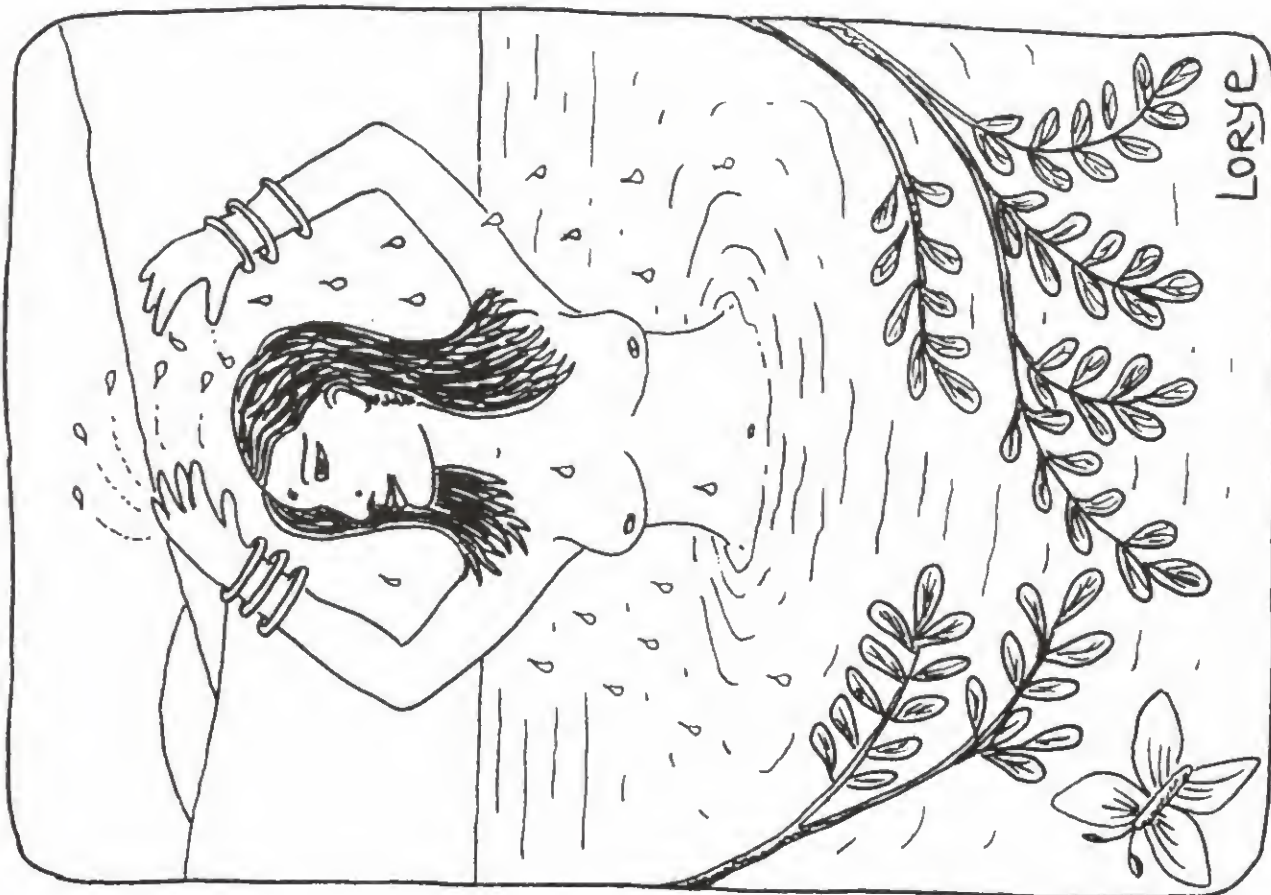
Copyright (c) Anke Mai 2000

Published by Anke Mai P.O. Box 8
Llandeilo
SA19 7XJ

e-mail - ankemai@gn.apc.org

SPACE FOR YOUR NOTES

This book is dedicated to my daughters Cora and Katja.



About the Illustrator:

Lorve Keats Hopper works with Creative Healing Arts Therapy, and has been teaching and facilitating Women's Wisdom Groups and Healing Retreats for the past ten years. She has also worked with young people in schools, youth clubs and international youth conferences.

About the Author:

Anke Mai is the mother of two daughters. She is deeply committed to empowering girls and young women. Anke has a background in Herbalism, Environmental Arts, work with children and Health Education for Young People.

Dear Reader,

Please write to me and let me know if you have found this book helpful. I would love to hear how YOU have celebrated your first menstruation. Please enclose a stamped addressed envelope if you want me to reply. I can also be contacted by e-mail and would like to get in touch with other women who are working with *Girls/Rites of Passage/Coming of Age Ceremonies*.

Best Wishes

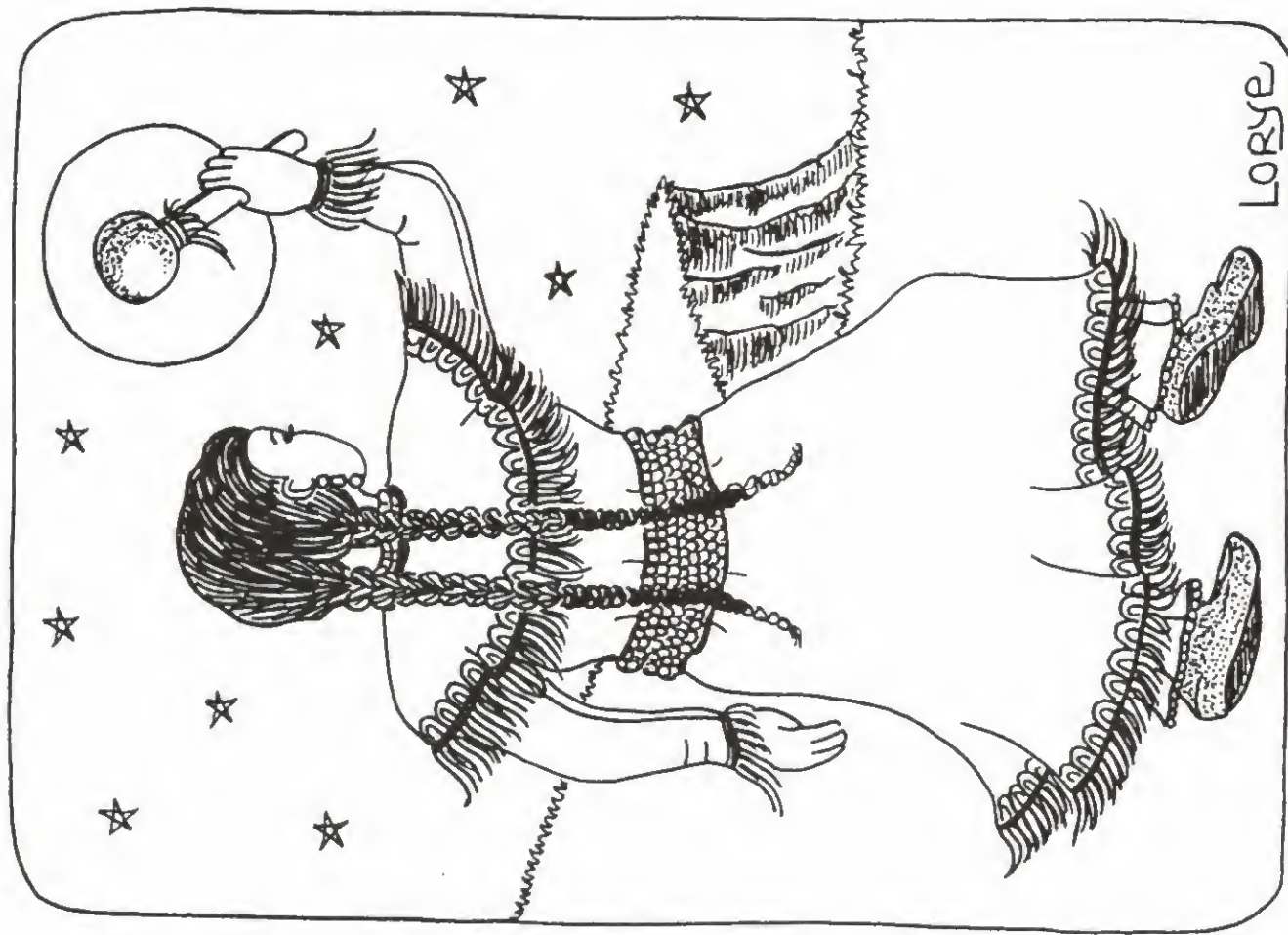
Anke Mai

Useful herb books include:

The Holistic Herbal
David Hoffman
Findhorn Press

The Complete Woman's Herbal
Anne McIntyre
Gaia Books

A good book on Aromatherapy is:
Patricia Davies
Aromatherapy A-Z
C. W. Daniel Company Ltd.



Black Haw combines well with Jamaican Dogwood (*Piscidia erythrina*) for painful periods.

There are many other herbs that can help with your menstrual cycle. Go to the local library or bookshop to find out more about healing plants.

I would like to mention two more herbs that are commonly used by many women:

Lady's Mantle (*Alchemilla vulgaris*)

The leaves and stems are collected in July and August. Lady's Mantle will help with period pains, also with excessive bleeding, as well as menopausal changes.

Motherwort (*Leonurus cardiaca*)

The stalks are collected at the time of flowering, between June and September.

Motherwort helps with menstrual and uterine conditions. It is especially used for delayed or suppressed menstruation, often associated with tension and anxiety. It is a useful tonic for menopausal changes. It is also excellent for the heart.

Please ask an adult to help you with the preparation of herbal teas. If you don't like the taste, add some sweetener like honey. If you still don't like it, try taking the herbs as a tincture. You could contact a qualified herbalist and ask for advice. The National Institute of Medical Herbalists has a list of fully qualified herbalists. Tel. 01392 426022.

Black Cohosh (Cimicifuga racemosa)

The root is collected in the autumn, cut and dried. Another bitter herb with a powerful relaxing action on the uterus. It also balances the female hormones.

Pour a cup of water onto 1/2 - 1 teaspoonful of the dried root and bring to the boil. Let it simmer for 10 - 15 minutes. Strain and drink a cupful three times daily.

Pasque Flower (Anemone pulsatilla)

The stalks are collected in March and April, when the plant is in flower. Pasque flower has a relaxing effect on the nervous system. It combines well with cramp bark for painful periods. Do not use the fresh plant!

Pour a cup of boiling water onto 1/2 - 1 teaspoonful of the dried herb, leave to infuse for 10 - 15 minutes. Strain and drink a cupful three times daily.

Black Haw (Viburnum prunifolium)

The bark from the roots and the trunk is collected in the autumn. The bark from the branches is collected in the spring and summer. Black Haw is closely related to Cramp Bark; it is another powerful relaxant to the uterus. It is used for painful periods and can be used for false labour pains, as well as threatened miscarriage.

Put two teaspoonfuls of the dried bark in a cup of water, bring to the boil and simmer for 10 minutes. Strain and drink one cupful three times a day.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
"Welcome to Womanhood", a poem by Lorye	1
Preface by Anke	3
Introduction for mothers	4
Introduction for girls	6
Becoming a woman "Around the world"	10
Celebration. Planning your special day	18
Moontime	34
Wise woman	38
Resources	44
About the author and illustrator	58

Welcome to Womanhood

Welcome to Womanhood little Sister,
Moontime is a special time,
A time to tune into our monthly cycle,
and to flow with the rhythm of the seasons.
A time to be alone and dream,
to write a poem, to paint a picture.
To treat our body to a luxurious scented bath,
to tune our minds to Nature.
To meditate by a tree, a stream,
to gaze upon a flower, a crystal,
to talk with the Moon and the Stars.
A time to dance and sing.
To share a vision with a Friend,
to light a candle for Peace.
Moontime is a special time,
a time of releasing the old,
to make way for the new.
Of releasing our Childhood,
And realising our Womanhood.
Welcome to your Moontime little Sister.

written by Lorye Keats Hopper

- ◆ Make sure you eat well, especially fresh fruit and vegetables, and drink plenty of water.
- ◆ Exercise if you can. You might not feel like it, but you will feel better for it afterwards. Cycle, take the dog for a walk, dance to your favourite music, try some exercises to strengthen your stomach and pelvic muscles. (You will find some in the book "Have you started yet?" by Ruth Thomson, MacMillan Books).
- ◆ Instead of taking a painkiller, try drinking some herbal teas.
- ◆ Be nice to yourself!

HERBS

You can grow your own, buy them in dried form in your local health food shop, or mail-order them from herbal suppliers. There are lots of good books available on herbs, providing all the information you will need.

The most commonly used herbs for painful periods are:

Cramp Bark (*Viburnum opulus*)

The bark is collected in April and May, cut into pieces and dried. It is a bitter herb to take, but has a relaxing effect on the uterus.

Put two teaspoonfuls of the dried bark into a cup of water and bring to the boil. Simmer gently for 10-15 minutes. Strain and drink a cupful three times a day.

PAINFUL PERIODS

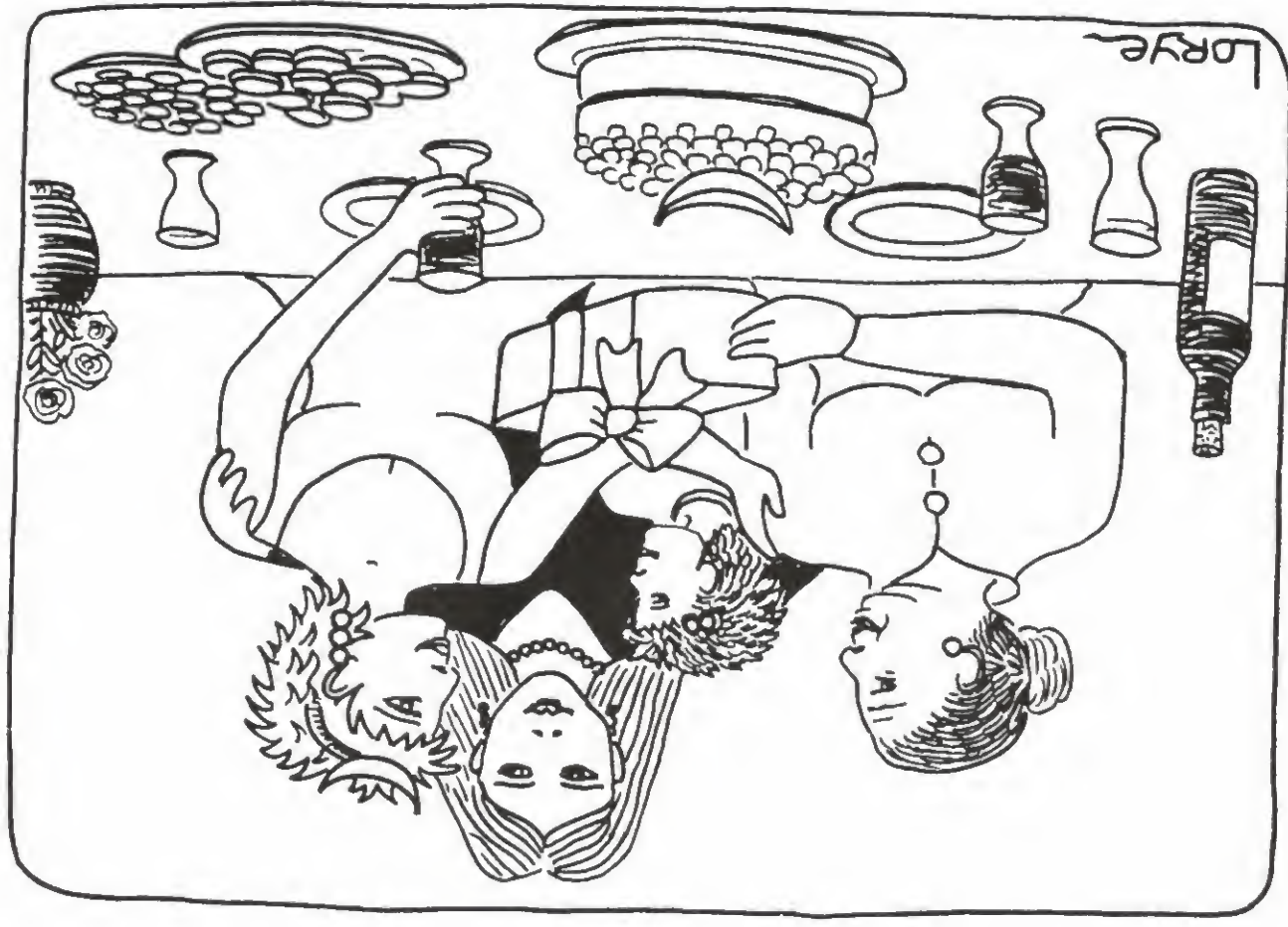
Information for girls and their carers.

Your periods will probably be irregular to start with, weeks, even months, may go by before your next period arrives.

You may also experience pain with your periods. Quite often a pulling sensation around your stomach, womb and lower back may tell you that another period is starting.

If you do get painful periods you could try:

- ◆ Hugging a hot-water bottle against your tummy.
- ◆ Taking a hot bath. You could try adding a few drops of relaxing oils like lavender or chamomile.
- ◆ Massaging your stomach and lower back. You could add a few drops of essential oils with relaxing effect to some massage lotion. Try marjoram, lavender or chamomile first. Clary sage, myrrh and sage will reduce pain, but also increase your blood flow. Avoid these oils if your periods are heavy and, especially, if you are pregnant. Geranium and rose will help with heavy periods; rose will also help with irregular cycles. You can find out more about these oils in books on aromatherapy. Essential oils are available at chemists, health and wholefood shops, or by mail-order. Check with an adult that they are safe to use for you.
- ◆ Try to relax, curl up with a good book, breathe deeply, maybe learn some yoga exercises to help with painful periods.



This book is written for girls aged 9 years and over, and their mothers, guardians and mentors.

Most parts of the book can be read by girls on their own, and afterwards discussed with their carers. I have marked each chapter clearly, and of course all of it can be read by mothers.

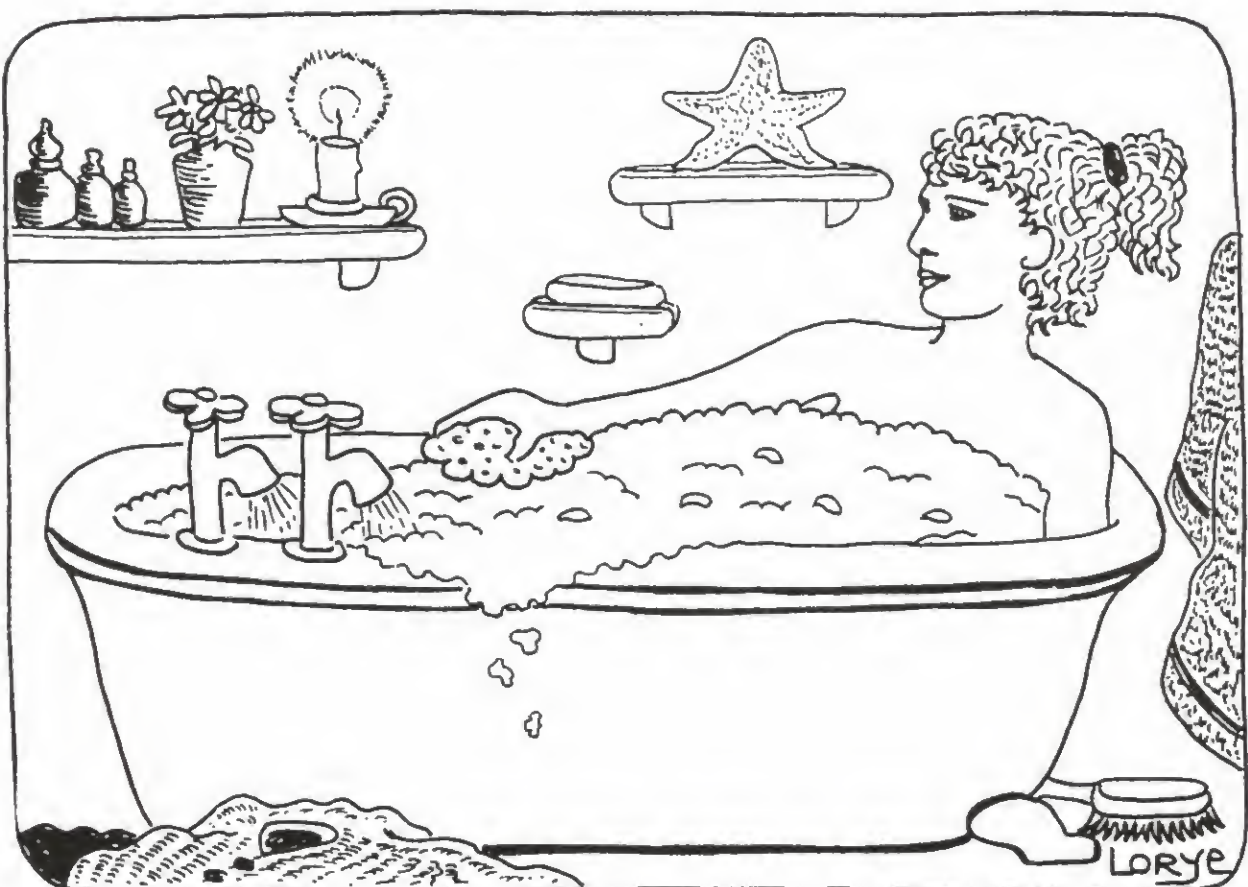
The aim of the book is to 'Welcome girls into Womanhood', and to see the beginning of menstruation as an occasion for great joy and celebration.

A woman's blood and hormonal cycle are closely connected to the ebb and flow of the moon. An average menstrual cycle lasts as long as it takes the moon to circle around the earth.

"FIRST MOON", first menstruation, sees the girl's newly found fertility as part of this natural cycle of life.

Celebration has always played an important part in my daughters' lives. I was looking for ideas, to mark the onset of menstruation, and found very little information in the available literature.

Hopefully this book is a step in the right direction. It is by no means complete, and you can both add your own ideas.



WORDCHECK FOR GIRLS

- Coming of age ♦ The time when a child turns into an adult
- Contraception ♦ Birth control or Family Planning, are all names given to the different ways of stopping a woman from getting pregnant during sex. Contraceptives like using a condom, or taking the Pill, stop you having a baby.
- Fertility ♦ Being fertile, the time during your menstrual cycle when you are most likely to get pregnant. Being able to have children.
- Hormones ♦ These are chemicals that your body produces. They cause the changes in your body during puberty.
- Hygiene ♦ Personal hygiene, looking after your growing body and keeping it clean.
- Initiation ♦ Celebrating the beginning of a different stage in your life, introducing something new. Starting school, starting college or work, getting married, starting a family. Initiation rituals often mark the change from a child to an adult.

INTRODUCTION FOR GIRLS

This book is for YOU. It comes as a gift at a time in your life when your body is changing from within. You are growing from a girl into a woman, and your body is adjusting to this great change.

It is a very special time in your life, probably leaving you feeling excited, confused, scared, proud, worried, shy, curious . . . to mention just a few emotions. One minute you might be happy and smiling, the next minute you might feel tearful and not know why.

You will notice, when your body starts to change, when your breasts begin to feel tender and grow, when your first body hair appears.

No girl can tell in advance when she will begin to bleed, when the first day of her menstruation will come.

I will use the words 'menstruation', 'period', 'bleeding', and 'menarche' in this book. There are many other words for it like 'menses', 'days', 'flow', 'time of the month', 'being on', and 'coming on'. Some people also call it the 'curse', which is not a pleasant word. Find the word that you like best and feel most comfortable with. 'Period' is an easy word and commonly used.

You may be as young as 8 or 9 years old, or already 16 years old, when your periods start. Most likely, you will be around 11-13 years old. Every person and every body is different and special. It really doesn't matter how old you are, as long as you are well prepared for it. There are many good books available to explain all the physical

changes in your body, as well as give you all the information you might want. A booklist of helpful literature is included at the end of the book under "Resources". I have also included a "Wordcheck" for you, where you can find words like 'menstrual cycle', 'hormones' and 'puberty'. Most of all I would recommend that you talk to your friends, mother, sister, grandmother, aunt, a teacher, school nurse or youth worker, to those women you trust and feel close to. Ask them all your questions. And find out how to use sanitary towels and tampons before your periods start. The more you know, the better you will feel about it all.

I hope that this book will help you look forward to the days when you begin to bleed. It will be your special time, when you join the circle of women. It will be a very important time in your life. Please don't let it go by unnoticed.

Once you begin to bleed every month, your body prepares itself to be able to give life, to be fertile and able to have a child of your own. However, I would strongly discourage you from getting pregnant, whilst you are still young. Although your body is ready to have a child, you are not yet ready emotionally to be a mother. A child needs a safe and secure environment to grow up in, and it is difficult to provide this as a teenager.

As you are growing into womanhood, you need to take care of your body, and your newly found fertility. Look after yourself with a good diet, regular exercise and daily hygiene. Keep your body healthy and active. And most of all, love and cherish your body.

Even though you don't know when you will get your period, it is a good idea to think about it with plenty of time beforehand.

A wonderful shop and mail order service selling books on the Goddess, Paganism and Witchcraft, as well as beautiful jewellery, sculptures, and music tapes.

For details of the Annual Goddess Conference contact:
The Goddess Conference
2-4 High Street
Glastonbury
BA6 9DU

I have probably only mentioned a few of the words that you don't understand. Ask a friend, older sister, mother or other adult to explain the other words to you.

INTRODUCTION FOR MOTHERS

Today, in Western cultures, the onset of menstruation is usually not honoured by ceremony or ritual.

Our daughters may be better informed and have a wide choice of sanitary products available, however they are still effected by the negative attitude towards menstruation. It is still largely a shameful subject, often talked about in secret, and many women continue to see the monthly bleeding as a "curse".

I think the time has come to celebrate ourselves and our daughters. To increase our own, and our daughters' self-esteem, and to prepare them well for the onset of menstruation. We should start at an early age, and hopefully our daughter's first bleeding will be anticipated with pride and joy.

It should also be understood and respected by all persons in her life, including her father and brothers.

Today, some girls start menstruation as young as 8 or 9 years old. Preparation has to begin early, the age depending on the girl's interest and willingness to talk about her changing body.

It is also important to remember that the year before the onset of menstruation is usually one of heightened sensitivity and emotionality, due to hormonal changes.

Your daughter may be 9, 11 or 16 years old, when she begins to bleed. Therefore it is important to find the right way of celebration, appropriate for her age; as well as for

your financial and family circumstances, and religious beliefs.

This book will give you ideas and help with the decision.

May you and the girls in your life enjoy reading "First Moon" and feel inspired to create their own celebration!

Your daughter will gradually change and grow, on her way to 'Becoming a Woman'. 'First blood' is a very important time in this process. Ceremony and ritual are spiritual ways to help young women across the threshold to adulthood.

Be prepared to also feel sadness, as well as joy, as your daughter is gradually leaving childhood behind.

I wish you well on your journey together.

Menopause	◆ When your periods stop, usually when you are around fifty years old.
Menstrual cycle	◆ The time from the beginning of one period to the beginning of the next.
Puberty	◆ The time when your body starts to change from a girl's to a woman's; pre-puberty means before this change starts.
Rites of passage	◆ A major turning point in your life, starting your first period, giving birth to a child, stopping your periods when you are older.
Ritual	◆ A special ceremony/event i.e. to welcome a new baby, to mark the change from a child to an adult, to celebrate a marriage or to say good-bye to a dead person.
Sanitary towels	◆ Soak up the blood from your period, as it leaves your body. Sanitary towels stick to the inside of your pants.
Spotting	◆ Loosing a few drops/spots of blood. Light bleeding.
Tampons	◆ Fit inside your vagina and absorb the blood from your periods before it leaves your body.

Sells environmentally friendly menstrual products. "Many Moons" are washable menstrual pads of brushed flannel cotton for exceptional comfort, absorbency and durability. These green menstrual care products come in different sizes, styles and a wonderful range of colours. Ask for a catalogue.

Feminine Alternatives
18 Tor View Avenue
Glastonbury
Somerset
BA6 8AF
Tel. 01458 834787

A mail order service run by Jaïne Raine, selling washable sanitary towels, sea sponges - the alternative to tampons, as well as vaginal speculums for cervical self-examination.

Starchild
The Courtyard
2-4 High Street
Glastonbury
Somerset
BA6 9DU
Tel. 01458 834663
www.starchild.co.uk

A shop filled with beautiful aromas, selling pure essential oils, perfumes and herbal remedies. "Starchild" offers a special MOONTIME massage oil containing marjoram, cypress and chamomile. Ask for a mail-order catalogue.

The Goddess and the Green Man
The Courtyard
2 High Street
Glastonbury
Somerset
BA6 9DU

Imagine who you would like to tell about your first menstruation.

Imagine how you would like to celebrate this special time.

It will probably depend a lot on how old you are, when you start to bleed.

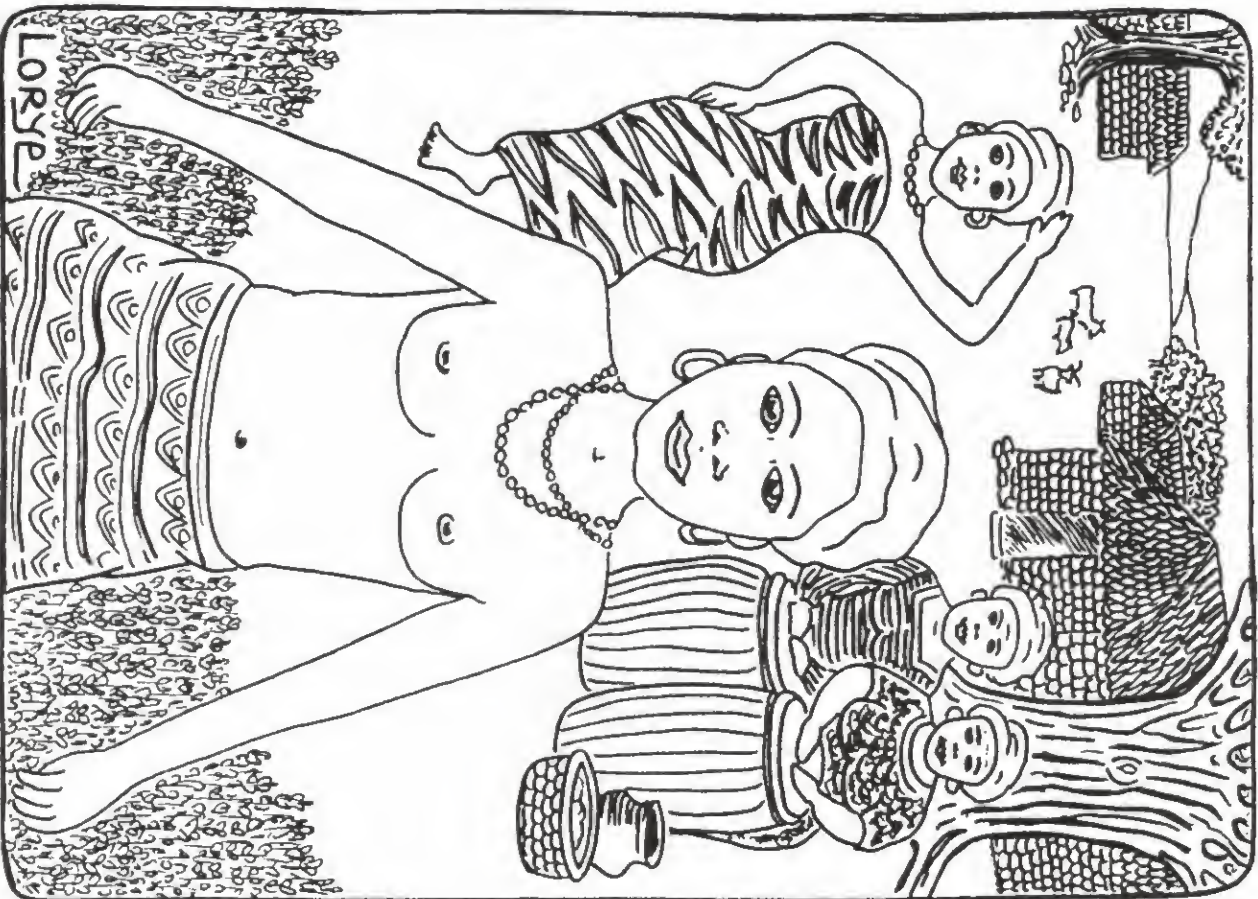
Maybe you want to get used to it first, only tell your mum about it, or your best friend, and then think about other people too.

Maybe you don't want your periods yet, or maybe you have been waiting for a long time for them to start.

How can you make this time special in your life?

To give you some ideas, I would like to take you to some countries around the world, where girls of your age receive a special celebration. I hope that these examples will inspire you.

Enjoy your journey!



Useful addresses

Brook Advisory Centre
Unit 421 Highgate Studios
53-79 Highgate Road
London
NW5 1TL
Tel. 0800 0185023

Brook runs local centres throughout England, as well as two centres in Scotland, offering individuals contraceptive advice and counselling for young people.

Family Planning Association
2-12 Pentonville Road
London
N1 9FP
Tel. 0171 837 5432
www.fpa.org.uk

The FPA is the UK's leading sexual health charity. It can give information on all aspects of sexuality and birth control. Contraceptive Education Service Helpline - tel. 0171 837 4044. The FPA has branches in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. It runs various teaching courses and has an excellent mail order service.

Childline Tel. 0800 1111
This is a free confidential telephone helpline for young people.

The Carrying Kind
123 Station Road
Wigston
Leicestershire
LE18 2DN
Tel. 0116 257 1897

Hair in Funny Places

Babette Cole

A Tom Maschler Book, Jonathan Cape

Sex

Everything you ever wanted to know but didn't like to ask

Anita Naik

Hodder Children's Books

Celebrating Girls

Nurturing and empowering our daughters

Virginia Beane Rutter

Conari Press, Berkeley, CA

Rites of Passage

People and customs of the world

Jacqueline Dineen

Dragon's World Children's Books

In Between

Short stories about leaving childhood

Miriam Hodgson

Mammoth Books

Tough Choices

Young Women talk about pregnancy

Alison Hadley

The Women's Press

Moon Wisdom

Sally Morningstar

An imprint of Anness

U.K. Manning Partnership, Bath

BECOMING A WOMAN "AROUND THE WORLD"

A journey for girls.

You might want to have a globe or atlas next to you, to look up all the countries and continents as you travel around the world.

Let us start your journey around the world in NORTH AMERICA. Imagine YOU are a North American Indian girl, living with the 'Apache' tribe. You are a girl who has just started her period, and you are full of joy, knowing that everybody in your village will join in your special celebration.

You go to your godmother's hut and place an eagle feather at her door. With this act you are asking her to be with you during the four days of celebration. If your godmother accepts, she will teach you all you need to know about becoming a woman.

To start with, you spend some time alone in a special hut, away from other children and men. For a while you fast to cleanse your body and mind. When you are ready, your godmother teaches you that you have started to bleed because you are now fertile. This means that you can have your own children, and with this you are now a "giver of life". You are very proud. Your godmother teaches you all you need to know about menstruation, fertility, sexuality and female medicine rituals. Whilst you are learning, a special dress is made for you. Your godmother also prepares you for your ceremony and teaches you a special dance. Finally, the big celebration with your whole tribe starts.

You wear your special dress and decorations. At first you dance alone, absorbing the drumming and singing from those around you. It makes you feel strong. Now you dance the special dance of the "Four directions" - see reference section. The whole community follows you in your dance. This dance symbolises your passage from birth to puberty, on to mothering, reaching maturity and wisdom in old age. It is about your growing from a baby into a girl, teenager, young adult and on into middle age and finally old age, hoping that you will be happy and well.

After the dancing finishes, cornmeal - which forms part of your daily food - and sacred plant pollen are thrown over your head. And with this you receive blessings and wishes that you may live a full life. Now it is your turn to bless the tribe, as a "giver of life". You are able to have children and contribute as a woman to your village.

What a beautiful experience for you to remember and to give you strength.

Let us move on to another NORTH AMERICAN tribe, the 'Cheyenne'. As a Cheyenne girl, you tell your mother first about the start of your menstruation. Your mother tells your father of this happy event. Meanwhile you take a cleansing bath after which your whole body is painted red. Over it you wear a special dress and you take your place of honour close to the open fire in your hut. An older woman from your community comes and sprinkles special grasses and flowers onto your fire. You lean over this sweet smelling smoke and let it cover your body. Nature's spirits are asked to protect your health and fertility.

After this smoke ritual, your father stands in the doorway of your hut and tells all the villagers that you are now a woman.

RESOURCES

Further Reading

Have You Started Yet

Ruth Thomas

MacMillan

Periods

Everything you ever wanted to know but didn't like to ask

Charlotte Owen

Hodder Children's Books

My Body, Myself

The ultimate health book for girls

Anita Naik

MacMillan

Sweet Secrets

Stories of Menstruation

Kathleen O'Grady and Paula Wansborough

Second Story Press, Canada

Honouring Menstruation

A time of Self Renewal

Lara Owen

Crossing Press, California

Let's Talk about Sex

Robie H. Harris

Michael Emberley (illustrations)

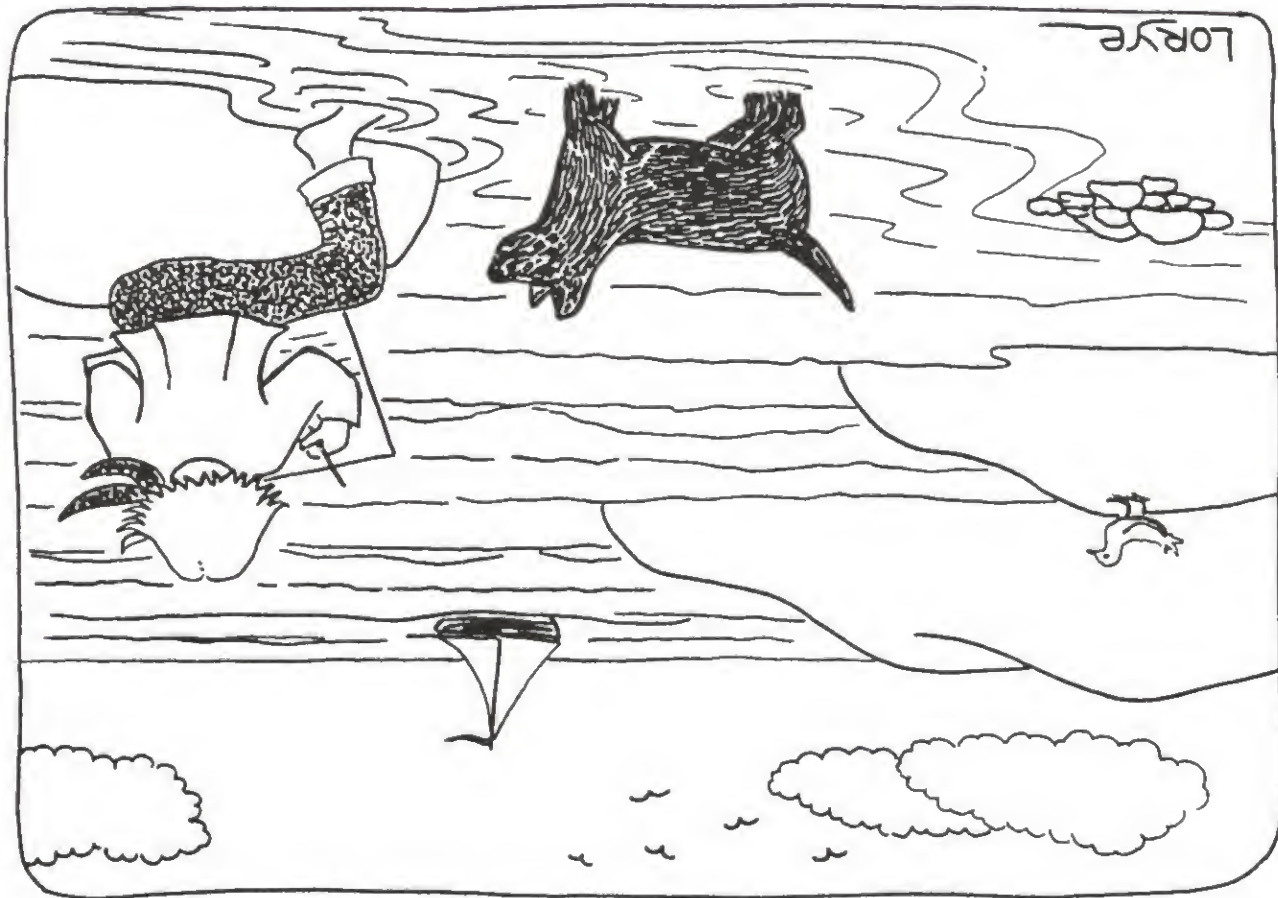
Walker Books

You follow your grandmother into her hut, where you stay for four days and learn all about being a Cheyenne woman. After this, another smoke ritual completes your entry into womanhood.

Let us continue our journey from North America to CENTRAL AMERICA, and briefly stop in PANAMA. Here you are a girl of the 'Kunda' Indians living on an island off the mainland. You, and several of your friends who recently started to menstruate, are having a ceremony together. You wear special clothes for this occasion, and a beautiful red, soft scarf, covered in gold embroidery and ancient symbols, is tied around your head. With this you are showing your new dignity as a woman. Your blouse also shines in strong red and gold colours, symbolising luck and fertility. Your celebration takes place in a special room, and lasts for several days.

We now leave Panama and travel down to SOUTH AMERICA, to the 'Aiary' tribe in BRAZIL. Here your whole family and your friends gather round you after you have announced your first period. Your mother symbolically cuts off your child pigtails and gives you a new, shorter haircut. All the people present ask for a strand of your hair to keep for good luck. For a month, until your next period starts, you are only allowed to eat bread and fish. This helps to cleanse your body and mind. Once you bleed for a second time, your father gets up at sunrise to sing a special song, inviting everyone in your village for a feast. You can now eat as much as you like.

It is time to leave one continent behind and travel across the Atlantic Ocean to AFRICA. We arrive in NIGERIA, where you are a girl of the 'Tiv' tribe. On the day of your



first menstruation, you are seen as a fertility giver, bringing good luck. On this day, you walk across all the fields of the village, blessing the soil and helping to bring a rich harvest. During a ceremony in your honour, you receive a fertility tattoo below your navel. From now on, you proudly display this decoration to show that you are not a child any longer.

In another African country, in the CONGO, menstruation blood is celebrated as the "blood of life".

Let us move on to ZAMBIA, and visit the 'Luvale' tribe. Here, as a young woman, you catch your first blood in a special cloth given to you by the women elders. Your grandmother buries this cloth under a holy tree to give the female power back to the earth and to ask for your protection. Once your first period has finished, you fast for a day and night. The women from your village will choose a female teacher for you. She will collect you from your hut, wrap you in a special blanket and lead you to the dance place of your ceremony. You are asked to crouch on the ground, face towards the earth, whilst the women from your tribe gather, and dance and sing around you. They dance the symbolic "death" of the girl you were, and the "rebirth" of the young woman you are now. Whilst the women dance, the men build an initiation hut for you near your mother's home. Everything for your hut has to be new, like bedding and cooking utensils. Once the hut is finished, the women lead you in a procession to your new home. A fire is lit in your hut, and your chosen teacher stays with you, whilst the community continues to dance, sing and celebrate.

In the following months, you have to learn a lot about:

knowledge of the 'Goddess', a love for mother Earth, passing on female rituals, the use of herbs and an awareness of the phases of the moon, and the seasonal cycle of nature.

I hope that you can find a mentor who will help to teach your daughter to love her body and to learn to honour herself. And to learn about her growing body with wonder and joy.

Teach her to use the bleeding days each month as her creative space, to slow down, to relax, to take extra care of herself, to listen to her dreams, to write, to draw, to walk in nature, to listen to music, to make and create.

May you find your mentor relationship mutually and deeply rewarding!

(Information for this chapter has been taken from :

Margaret Minker
Der Mondring
dvt Verlag München)

Relationships

Talking about boys and men. Talking about lesbian relationships. Learning how to deal with sexual harassment both in our own families and in the outside world. Personal boundaries, creating safe loving relationships. How to say 'No', looking after your own needs. Personal safety, especially at night. Looking at rape and sexual abuse. Teaching self defence.

Legal Rights

Young women and the law, including sexuality, abortion, marriage, education, voting, work equality.

'Her story'

A look at important women in history. The changing role of women in society. Female role models, including politicians, scientists, artists, musicians and writers, as well as female explorers.

Career Planning

Possible help and advice, working together with teachers and parents. Female contacts, organisations, advice centres.

This list is by no means complete and can be added to or changed by mothers, daughters and mentors.

Some areas may be covered at school or addressed at a youth club, whilst many will need to be discussed at home or with a mentor.

Most of all, the mentor acts in the tradition of the 'Wise Woman', who can introduce the girl into the secrets of the female way of life. For you this may include teaching the

- * the phases of the moon
- * recognising, collecting and preparing medicinal herbs
- * sexuality, contraception, pregnancy and childbirth
- * tending your hut fire, fishing, food gathering and cooking
- * storytelling
- * a special dance movement to prepare you for lovemaking and childbirth.

You are also expected to have inner peace and strength, and work hard in your community. Once your learning phase is complete, you will be given another celebration during the next full moon. You are washed by the women of your village, your hair is plaited and your body is covered in vegetable oil and red earth. You are allowed to join in the women's dance for the first time. You are very proud and happy.

In another African country, ZIMBABWE, you can take on a new name once you have started to menstruate.

Let us leave the African continent behind and travel across the Indian Ocean to ASIA. Imagine that you are a girl living in SHRI LANKA. Here, on the first day of your menstruation, a horoscope is drawn up to give your family information about your future years of marriage. Afterwards you have a ritual bath. You leave your girlhood behind and step out of the bath as a young woman. You dress all in white, the colour of initiation. Your family gives you a celebration, during which you receive many gifts and wishes of good luck.

If you lived in KAMPUCHEA your parents would plant a banana tree at the time of your first menstruation. The fruit of this tree would be for you alone to harvest and eat.

In JAPAN a party would be held for all your friends and relatives. The festive table would be decorated with red flowers, candied red apples and red coloured rice.

After this brief visit to Asia we move on to AUSTRALIA. Imagine yourself now as an 'Aboriginal' girl. Here it is a custom that, once you have started to menstruate, your mother and grandmother build a hut for you. You will spend a few days on your own in it, resting, meditating and receiving messages in your dreams. This will make you feel stronger inside, as you are now ready to start life as a woman. All the women of your village will gather for a celebration. They will dance and sing, and give thanks for the female power that lives within you. They will give thanks for the physical changes of your growing body, which now can bear and feed children, like mother earth gives birth to plants, animals and humans, and provides for them.

To complete our journey, let us travel across the PACIFIC OCEAN back to NORTH AMERICA, where we started. Our last country is CANADA where I would like you to join the 'Nootka' tribe. All the children in this community learn to swim from an early age. Girls are expected to show their strength, courage and power by swimming a long distance. You, and other young women who have just started their period, go out to sea in a specially decorated boat. You jump into the water and swim back to the shore, encouraged by the cheers from the people rowing your boat. They stay close to you. On the beach, a big welcome by all your family and friends awaits you, followed by an all-night party.

You have come to the end of your journey around the world, and it is time to return to your own country.

of teaching and guidance. Where do you need support, and where does your daughter need more privacy and independence?

The mentor could also play a part in your daughter's special ceremony or celebration.

The following areas are important to growing young women, and need to be addressed at some point in their adolescence. However, they do not all need to be covered by one person alone. A mentor should not feel overwhelmed, but excited, committed and positive about her role.

A 'female curriculum' would include:

Menstrual Health

Anatomy and physiology of the female reproductive system, the menstrual cycle, ways to deal with period pains including exercise and the use of natural painkillers e.g. herbs and homeopathy, menstrual hygiene, the use of sanitary protection.

Sexual Health

Female and male anatomy. Girls and boys' changes during puberty. Information about sex, contraception, Aids and HIV, sexually transmitted infections, homosexuality, pregnancy and childbirth, and some basic childcare.

General Health

Health foods, exercise, personal hygiene, dieting, bulimia and anorexia, alcohol and drugs, body image and self-esteem.

Useful organisations and contacts e.g. Childline and Kidscape.

older friend, and someone who shows by example how good it feels to be a woman.

A mentor would also act as an independent advisor and companion, who is not involved in the mother-daughter dynamic. A mentor would act as a representative of the outside world, into which the girl is taking her own independent steps.

Who could act as a mentor in our society and how would you go about choosing the right woman?

Talk to your daughter and see if you both think that it is a good idea to find a mentor for her. Find someone close by, who your daughter can meet with and talk to on a regular basis. Find someone you both like and especially someone you can both trust. It could be:

- ◆ an aunt
- ◆ a grandmother
- ◆ a godmother
- ◆ a close female friend of your family
- ◆ a teacher
- ◆ a youth worker
- ◆ a work colleague
- ◆ a much valued neighbour,

Being a mentor is a big responsibility and a commitment over several years. Your chosen 'Wise Woman' will need to understand her special role as a guide, and be willing to take this task on.

Once a mentor has been chosen, she will need to talk to you as the mother, and together you should decide on the areas

Did you enjoy your travels?
Did you learn from all these traditions?
Do you feel inspired to start looking at your own celebration?

Even if we do not live in tribal communities, we can find ideas and inspirations in these old traditions. Some of the ceremonies I have described are still practised today, whilst others are no longer followed. All of the mentioned traditions have a lot in common, and I would like to have a closer look at these elements in the next chapter.

(The information for this chapter has been taken from:
Margaret Minker
Der Mondring
dtv Verlag Mnnchen)

WISE WOMAN

A chapter for mothers.

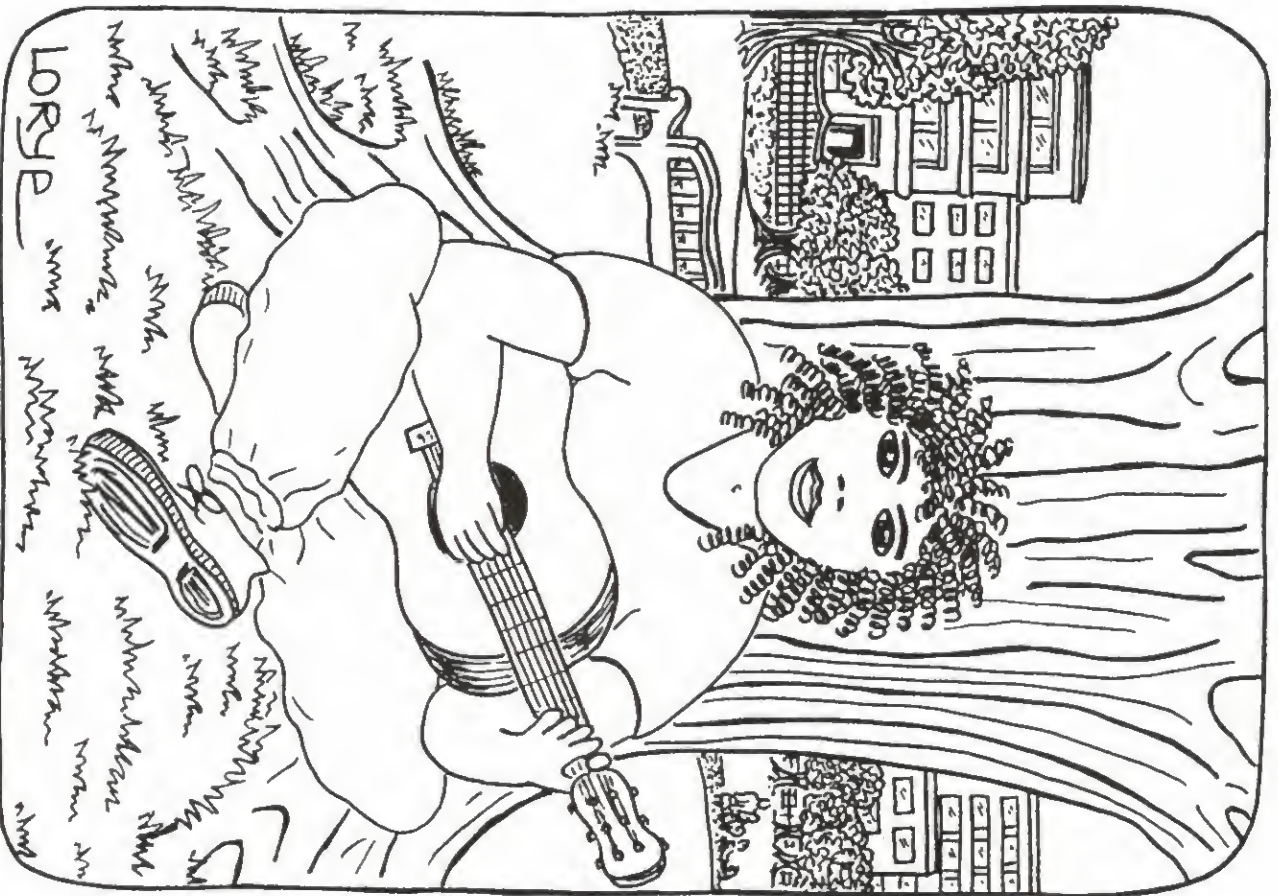
In many cultures, a 'Wise Woman', an older woman, is chosen as a mentor for the young woman who has just started to menstruate. The mentor acts as a guide, as a teacher and companion to the younger woman. She gives advice and help, and traditionally would prepare the newly menstruating girl for her role as a woman.

The 'Wise Woman' would not be the mother of the girl. Sometimes the grandmother acts as a mentor, or the women of the girl's community choose a suitable guide.

I think the time has come to reclaim this tradition of teaching and especially **WELCOMING** our daughter into womanhood.

As our daughters grow into women and take their first steps into society, they will need to 'turn away' from their families. During the adolescent years, our daughters will begin their journey to find themselves and their own position in the world. During this transition stage, our daughters will need teachers, guides advisors and companions. A mentor can take some weight and responsibility off our shoulders, as mothers, and act as a companion to us as well.

A mother's role will still be very important, but our daughters will also need someone else to turn to, to talk about "Becoming a woman". From menstruation to sexuality, body image and first boy friend, someone they can trust, and someone who will not go and immediately tell us all the details. Our daughters will need a woman who acts like an



CELEBRATION - PLANNING YOUR SPECIAL DAY

Ideas for mothers and daughters to discuss together:

The word 'celebrate' comes from the ancient Greek word 'melpo' meaning to sing, to dance, to praise.

(Ref. Celebrating Girls)

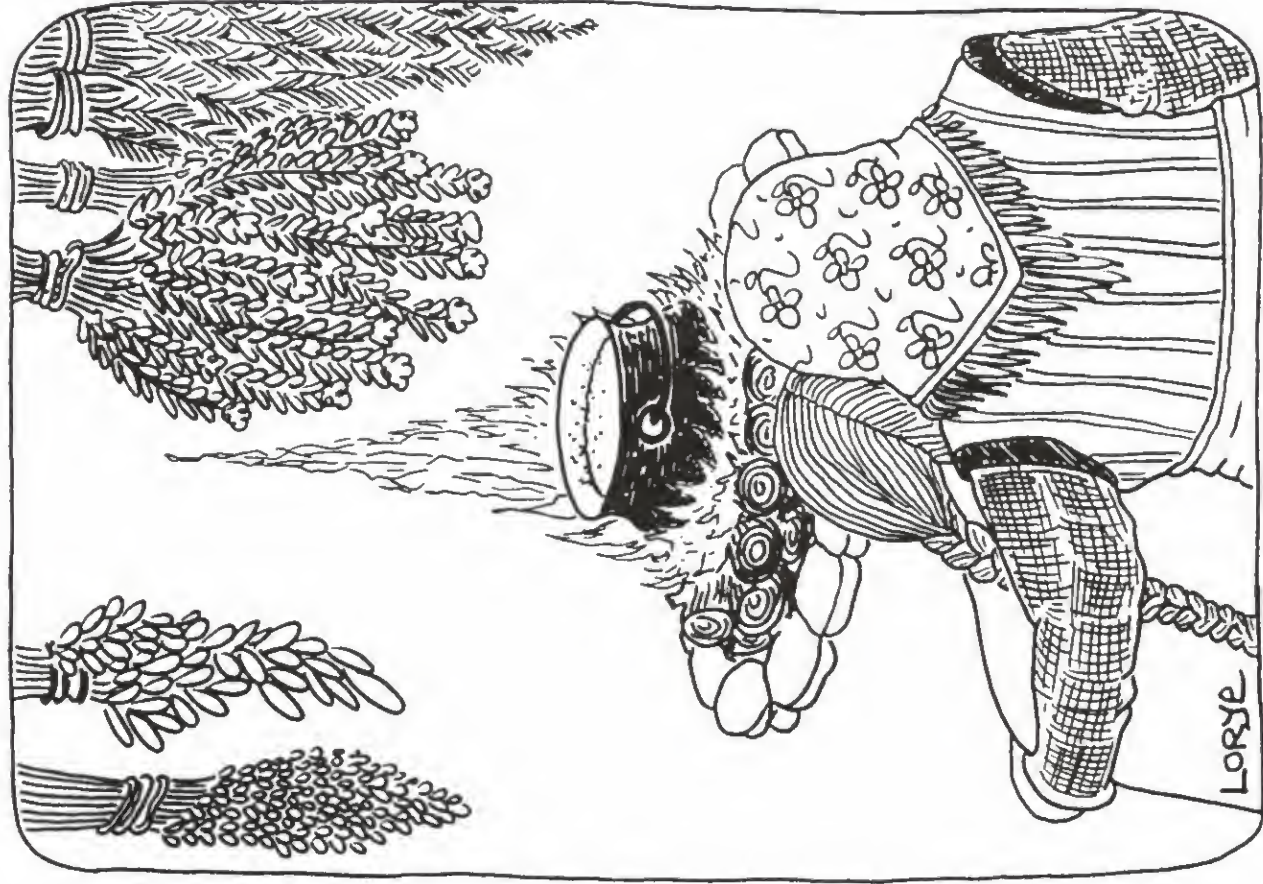
Virginia Beane Rutter
Conari Press)

By deciding to celebrate your first menstruation, you are making a statement to the world that **YOU** matter. That you are important and that this celebration marks an important passage in your life. Let this event nurture you and help to make you feel strong and good about yourself.

As you don't know when your periods will start, it is a good idea to think about it beforehand and, I hope, to have some plans and preparations ready. It is **YOUR** day, and you can choose to spend this day in the way that you want. Of course you will need the agreement and support of your family or carer.

Most likely, you don't know yet how you will feel and what you will want to do. You don't have to do anything at all. Just going through this big transition may be enough in itself for you.

You will probably tell your mum about it first. Maybe you will talk to your best friend about it too. You might want some time to yourself. Maybe you will feel tired and achy and not like any company at all. Your period might start when you are still quite young, and you might feel like waiting for a celebration until you are a bit older, when some of



your friends are menstruating too. You could decide to have a party or day out together. Or you might have lots of plans ready and want a celebration as soon as possible.

It is up to you, and your family, to make this time special. If you decide to have a celebration/party/ceremony/gathering, think about who you would want to invite? Family? Friends? Girls and women only? How do you feel about telling your brother, father, uncle or grandfather?

If you want a special celebration, think about what would make you feel good and special.

Go through the list of options in this chapter. Take your time, and talk to your mother, carer and also your friends about it. Maybe you can come up with your own ideas.

Decide if you want to be involved in planning and preparing your celebration, or if you would rather have a surprise present or outing. Talk to your family to see what is actually realistic for your situation, including money matters.

And if you are reading this book as a young woman or adult and already have your periods, but feel that you have missed out on a celebration, don't worry. Invite your woman friends, use your imagination and give yourself a special day.

If we refer to your "Journey around the world", we will see that all these celebrations have a lot in common.

TIME ALONE

In many cultures a special hut is built for the newly men-

Reference:

The Woman's Encyclopaedia of Myths and Secrets

Barbara Walker
Harper and Row

Women's Medicine Ways
Marcia Starck
The Crossing Press

Der Mondring
Margaret Minker
dtv Verlag

It is a good idea to mark your own menstrual cycle on a calendar each month. Write down the days and dates of your period. Note the length of your cycle. You could also keep a personal mood chart, writing down how your cycle affects your feelings. Some days you might feel great, whilst on others you might feel more tearful and low in energy.

When you first start your periods, your cycle might still be quite irregular. The length of your cycle is the number of days between the start of one period and the next. It may be as short as 21 days or as long as 35 days, or anything in between. And the length of your period, the number of days that you bleed, will also vary from woman to woman. Some days may be lighter, you bleed less, and some days heavier, with more blood loss. Ask your mum, sister or friend to help you find your own way of recording your periods. And see where your cycle is in relation to the moon cycle.

If you like the moon and feel close to it, you could hold your celebration at new moon. Or you could ask for a special moon present to mark the beginning of your periods. Maybe a ring, necklace or earrings with the moon symbol. You could also include the moon in your party. There are many moon decorations available, like candles, cards, lanterns, pictures, etc. You could ask for a moon story to be told, or make up a moon dance. Many songs also talk about the moon. Or you could simply go for a quiet moon walk and let the moon speak to you.

struating girl. She spends some time away from the rest of the community. Here she finds the space to go inward, to find her inner strength and knowledge. Often she is accompanied by an older woman.

During pre-puberty and puberty your body is in great transition. You are changing, growing from a girl into a woman. Your hormones and emotions may leave you feeling tired and vulnerable.

During 'Time Alone' you can find your inner peace and strength again. You can be with yourself and adjust to your inner and outer changes. 'Time Alone' can happen in many different ways. Here are some options. See if you like the sound of them. Wherever you live, you can find a way to be on your own for a while, if it is important to you.

- ◆ You could choose to have a day/night/weekend away from your normal routine. Stay with a relative or friend who is willing to look after you, and who is willing to respect your need for quiet space.
- ◆ You could put up a tent in your garden, or if you are lucky enough, in a field or woodland near your home. Spend a night by yourself. Ask your siblings to leave you alone. You may want to ask someone to keep guard nearby, especially in a woodland or field.
- ◆ You could find your own special tree and sit under it, in your garden, park or woodland nearby. Get to know your tree and follow your dreams under it.
- ◆ Lie in the grass and look up at the sky.

- ◆ Go for a bike ride.
- ◆ Take your dog for a walk.
- ◆ Hire a rowing boat in the park.
- ◆ Take a bath with your favourite bubbles.
- ◆ Go to your room and listen to some music.
- ◆ Write a daily journal.

FASTING

Not eating food for a day or longer, or only eating certain foods, is a way to cleanse your body and soul. With this you are honouring the transition that your body is going through. However, this is not something to do or decide on your own. If you are deciding on a more spiritual ceremony, you could have a cleansing day beforehand of eating only fruit and drinking plenty of water. You will need your parents or guardians' agreement.

BATHING

Another way to cleanse your body, and leave the 'old you' behind, is by taking a ritual bath. You could make it a part of your ceremony or celebration. Or you could simply just enjoy this special bath, after you started bleeding for the first time. Use your favourite bath foam, bath oil and scatter scented herbs or flowers onto the water. Light candles, if you are allowed, and play some nice music. Enjoy! It is a lovely way to look after your body.

MOONTIME

A chapter for girls.

Did you know that your periods and the moon are closely related? That some women called their periods 'moontime' in the past? The words 'menstruate' and 'menses' come from the latin word 'mensis', which means 'month'. An average menstrual cycle lasts as long as it takes the moon to circle around the earth, 29.5 days. Many cultures have noticed that the moon's phases, from new moon to full moon, and the woman's menstrual cycle are closely linked.

Chinese women started a moon calendar 3000 years ago, writing down 28 "houses" through which the moon passed. Every woman of the Mayan culture in Central America knew that the 'Great Mayan Calendar' had first been based on the women's menstrual cycle. The Romans also calculated their time on the basis of menstruation = a calendar month.

The moon usually is thought of as female, and the sun as male. Stories are told that, in the past, all the women of some communities would menstruate at the same time of the month, usually during new moon. Whilst full moon is the time for greatest fertility and ovulation, the time to conceive a child. Also, all over the world, many women give birth during full moon. In our modern society, women have lost touch with the moon cycle. And it is now time to reclaim this connection.

You could have a look at your own menstrual cycle and the moon phases. You can buy moon charts and calendars, and a lot of ordinary diaries and calendars tell you when it is full moon or new moon.

CLOTHES

What will you do after your special bath? Celebrate with your family and friends? Go out for a meal with your mum? Go camping for the night with your dad? Going to bed for some time alone?

Are you planning to have a ritual bath as one part of your spiritual ceremony? Would you enjoy wearing special clothes?

Do you remember the celebration colours from our 'Journey around the world'? They were white, red and gold. White for purity, red for your menstrual blood and gold for special occasions. Do you like any of these colours? Do you know which ones suit you?

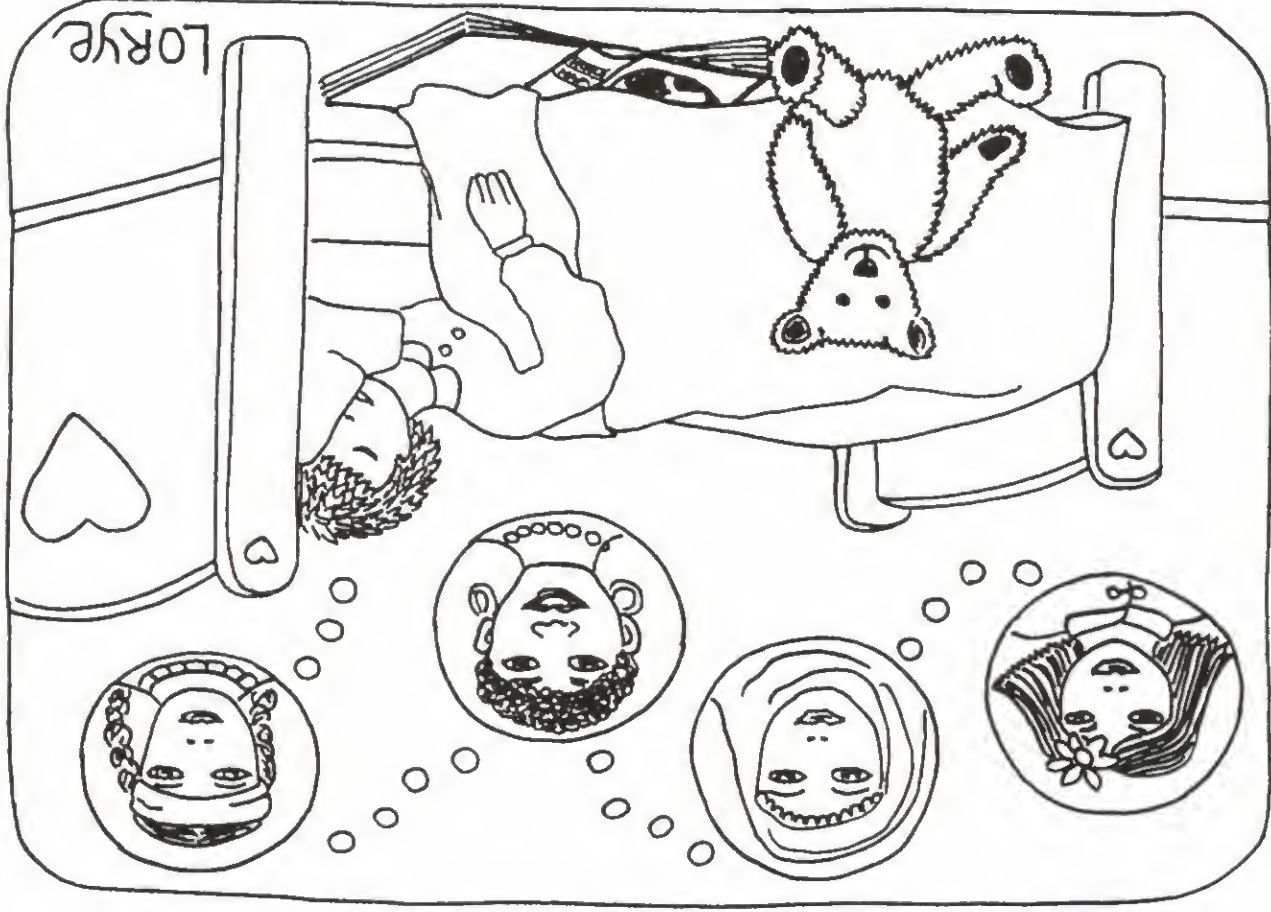
Would you like to wear clothes in any of these colours for your special day? You could have a look at your own clothes, or borrow some from your sister or friend. Maybe your family can afford to buy you a new outfit for this occasion.

A red scarf is a lovely present at this time. You could wear it each month when you are bleeding. Maybe your mum, sister, granny or aunt would like to embroider onto it.

Wear whatever makes you feel good.

HAIR/MAKE-UP/PERFUME

Do you like your hair? This might be a good time in your life to have a change of style.



Do you like using make-up, or are you not sure about it?

Ask your mum or friend for advice. Would an appointment with a beautician be a way to celebrate for you? Or buying your first own make-up?

Would you like to try out some perfume? Maybe you could choose your own bottle. Ask your mum or carer to help you.

Maybe you know all about make-up already and it is nothing special any longer. Or maybe you don't like the idea of make-up at all.

Does body painting appeal to you? You could invite your friends and paint you body red, or try out natural plant and earth pigments. Ask an adult to help you with this. Go for a walk together and try to find natural colouring materials, like clay and plants.

Have fun, whatever you do.

JEWELLERY

This is an occasion to receive your own special jewellery. Maybe you will be given a piece of family jewellery, a necklace, a bracelet or a ring. Or maybe you would like to go out with your mother or family and choose a necklace or ring to mark the day that you started to menstruate. Maybe you don't like the idea of a party or celebration with your family. You want to do something private and special in a different way. It also doesn't need to cost a lot of money. You could choose a small ring with a red stone or maybe a moon-design. A ring would be a lovely way to remember this time which only comes once in your life.

The meal could be followed by some story telling, a shared craft activity or dancing.

SPACE FOR YOUR OWN IDEAS

candles will look good. Maybe your daughter would like to wear red, and her guests could be asked to wear some red too.

Next, think about which red foods or drinks you could offer. Have some fun together with your daughter.

Foods: Red fruits include strawberries, raspberries, redcurrants, cherries, apples, melon, red oranges, and also pomegranates, an ancient symbol of female fertility.

You could make a big bowl of red fruit salad. Or you could use red fruit in the form of icecream, sorbet, yogurt, jam or fruit juice.

Red vegetables include tomatoes, peppers, beet root, cabbage, radishes, some variety of lettuce leaves, and also red onions. Again you could make a red salad, or a soup, stuff red peppers or make a pizza with red toppings. Here you could include red meat like pepperami slices. You could also use red pasta.

Drinks: Red drinks include fruit juices, vegetable juices, herbal teas or maybe a first taste of red wine.

You could also hard boil eggs, as a symbol of your daughter's new fertility. She could paint them red with her friends, or colour them with beetroot juice.

Maybe your daughter would enjoy writing out a menu in advance, again in red, and make name cards for the table.

If you are interested in stones and crystals, you could choose the one which has the most meaning to you. And it doesn't need to be red. Or you could choose a ring with a moon on it, as a symbol of your closeness to nature and its changing cycles, just like your own now. You could choose a ring with your star sign, or one with a woman's symbol on it.

You could ask for the date of your first menstruation to be engraved into the ring or other piece of jewellery. This would make it even more special.

FLOWERS

Most celebrations and ceremonies include the use of flowers. Do you like flowers? I hope you will have lots of flowers around you at this special time. Maybe your mum or dad will pick or buy you flowers when you start to menstruate. Congratulations on your way to becoming a woman! You could wear a flowercrown or garland for your celebration. Or scatter pink and red flower petals in your bath. Use flowers to decorate your dinner table or party room.

Maybe you would like to plant a small tree or scented rosebush in your garden, to mark this special day. You could choose a tree with red fruit, like cherries or apples, which are only yours to harvest and eat.

GETTING UP TO DATE

This is also a good time in your life to get up-to-date.

Maybe you have outgrown some of your toys, books and clothes. Maybe you would like to change the wallpaper in your room. Could you help your parents redecorate?

And what about your name? Are people calling you by your childhood nickname? Do you still like this? Or would you like to be called by your real name instead now?

Look at your life and see where an outer change might be needed to match your transition from a girl into a woman. It is good to talk to your parents about this.

I hope that the ideas above have inspired you to think about your own celebration. Of course you can't expect to do all of this. Think about what appeals to you most:

- ◆ Do you want a quiet celebration?
E.g. A meal out? A day out? A special present?
- ◆ Do you want a celebration with family and/or friends?
E.g. A meal at home with all your family? A party with your friends?

- ◆ Do you want a spiritual ceremony?
E.g. A ritual and blessing? An evening of dance, drumming and storytelling?

Think about who you would like to invite.

Think about where you would like to meet.

Think about food, room decorations, music, invitations etc.

Think about what you would like to wear.

Ask someone to help you with all the preparations.

And a note for mothers:

If your daughter is old enough and wants to be actively involved in the preparations of her celebration, let her do

community runs behind her. They do this to express their desire that the girl live through the four stages of life. The dancing is followed by the tribe blessing the girl, and in return, the girl, acting as 'Changing Woman', blessing the tribe: I give you life. Both dancing and also fasting continue for four days.

Ref. Red Moon Passage
Bonnie J. Horrigan
Thorsons

The book "Women's Medicine Ways", Cross-Cultural Rites of Passage, by Marcia Starck, The Crossing Press, USA contains a chapter on Puberty Ceremonies, as well as many beautiful chants, which you might like to include in your ceremony.

RED PARTY

If your daughter simply wants to have some fun with her friends, you could suggest the idea of a Red Party.

In many cultures RED is the colour of joy and fertility.

Red is also the colour of royalty, symbolising strength and power. Red is the warmest of all colours. In some cultures, girls are covered in red paint once they start bleeding, or they wear a red headscarf or receive a red scarf, which they wear with pride from then on, as a symbol of their womanhood. And red is also the colour of the menstrual blood.

You could plan a Red Party for her celebration. Use the colour red to decorate your kitchen or dining room. Red flowers, scarves, ribbons, red lanterns or balloons and red

North to East:

The first quadrant on the North American medicine wheel refers to ages 0 - 13, birth to puberty. The childhood and learning 'everything' period.

East to South:

The second quadrant, refers to the 'mothering' period. From menstruation to first child, from nurturing your own family to also being actively involved in the community.

South to West:

The third quadrant is the period of maturity. After being concerned about your own family and community, the relationship to the larger world now becomes important. The time of grandchildren begins and of being a mentor to young women.

Menopause marks the transition from the third into the fourth quadrant.

West to North:

The fourth quadrant refers to the period of the 'True Self'. It is you and the great mystery, the meaning of life and moving towards your own death.

In the Apache tradition, when a young girl comes of age and begins to bleed, she is welcomed into womanhood by her entire tribe. She learns the steps of the 'Sunrise Dance' and 'Changing Woman', the proud giver of all life. First the girl dances alone, then the entire community joins in. The young girl runs in the four directions, whilst the

her share. However, you might decide that you want to do most of it for her, after you have discussed her options with her.

Or maybe you decide that a "gathering" is not a good idea at this time. You might like to celebrate in a very different way. More quiet or more personal for just the two of you.

Or you might want to give her a surprise present, which also doesn't have to cost a lot. E.g you could ask the female members of your family to join in a craft project. You could make a special patchwork quilt between you, or an embroidery together, or a photo album of all the female family members. You could make her a necklace with beads given by all family members, or write a collection of poems for her. Use your imagination and creativity.

Or you might feel drawn to do some travelling with your daughter. This would be a good time to take her to one of the sacred sites of the Goddess e.g. Glastonbury.

If your daughter is already older by the time she starts to menstruate, she might like to set herself more of a challenge to mark this important event in her life.

PROJECT/PRACTICAL TASK

Your daughter might be into her 'teens' by the time her periods start. She no longer sees herself as a child and wants society to recognise that she is growing and changing on all levels. She begins to understand her increased responsibility towards society, and she is aware that she is walking on stepping stones towards full adulthood. As she

is growing physically and mentally, she could mark the beginning of menstruation with a special project or task. She could set herself a challenge, which will stretch her, test her abilities, or affirm her responsibilities towards others and the planet we live on.

You could talk to her about her future role as an adult, and about practical ideas to mark this transition.

Your daughter could set herself a physical task, which will test her limits, e.g. a long distance run, taking part in a riding competition, climbing a mountain, cycling or swimming further than she has done so far. She could find sponsors for this task, and prove her strength and power, as well as collect money for a charity.

If she is not interested in sport, she could set herself a practical task, e.g. volunteering in an ecological project, joining in local community activities like visiting ill children in hospital or helping in an old people's home.

The project or task could be followed by a ceremony or celebration with family and friends. Depending on the age of your daughter, this could be more of a 'Coming of Age' celebration. Welcoming and honouring her as a woman.

It is very appropriate for a young woman at this stage in her life to choose a mentor. Parents are normally the least appropriate people to guide young people through initiation. Teenagers have to break away from the influence of their parents and find their own way in the world. However, adults need to provide structure, boundaries and a safe environment for young people who want to test their abilities and limits. In our society teenagers often try to initi-

ate themselves by danger-seeking activities such as taking drugs or joyriding. Initiation is not something young people can do for themselves, but something through which they must be guided by an adult.

Talk to your daughter, look at her needs and set up an appropriate challenge for her, which she can complete!

SPIRITUAL CEREMONY

Puberty rites, or 'Coming of Age' ceremonies are usually performed with only women present. However, the male members of your family should also be included in some part of the ceremony. Puberty ceremonies are usually held soon after the first menstruation, often during the new moon following the menstruation. Or they take place during a special time of the year, such as the spring, when the plants begin to bloom, and May Day celebrations and Fertility Rites are held. Often a group of girls hold a ceremony together at this time of the year.

Depending on your daughter's age and your family circumstances, the ceremony can be as simple or as elaborate as you wish. You could hold a private, family only, blessing followed by a party for all her friends.

The ceremony could include the use of candles, incense, chants, poems, prayers, ceremonial objects etc.

You might want to refer to the four directions in your special menstruation ceremony. The North American Indians relate the "Four Directions" to the four stages of life a woman moves through.